



Rick Cruz
Board Chair

June 16, 2020

Via Electronic Mail

Brenda Parks, Chair
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B
6856 Eastern Ave NW, #316
Washington, DC 20012

Dear Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B,

The DC Public Charter School Board (DC PCSB) received your letter of April 28, 2020 regarding safety concerns around the expansion of Rocketship Education DC Public Charter School (Rocketship PCS) at 5430 3rd Street NW. In your letter, you ask DC PCSB to consider how to improve its processes for oversight of student safety, and ensure public charter schools provide complete and accurate information to DC PCSB.

In response to your concerns, I want to share the following examples of recent steps DC PCSB has taken to enhance oversight of health and safety and improve information sharing in public charter schools:

- DC PCSB is collaborating with the District of Columbia Department of Human Resources to develop a more streamlined process for schools to conduct required criminal background checks for staff. This initiative is currently in the pilot phase. If successful, it is our goal to ultimately expand the program to all public charter schools.
- DC PCSB has worked closely with the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide schools with guidance on detecting and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect during the distance learning period.
- In August 2020, each public charter school will be required to submit to DC PCSB its *Student Protection Policy*, which must describe the steps the school will take to prevent and address student sexual abuse by staff, and student-on-student acts of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating violence. Each school's policy must align with the School Safety Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018.
- In early March, DC PCSB planned a session to discuss best practices regarding Aftercare Providers. However, the session was canceled due

to COVID-19; but it is our intention to hold the session, once health guidance allows.

- In April, DC PCSB facilitated a webinar for school leaders on virtual privacy, which included strategies to ensure that student privacy is protected through the transition to virtual learning.

In addition, DC PCSB will collect information on each public charter school's reopening plan for school year 2020-21, which will include school policies to ensure safety amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. These plans will be made public on DC PCSB's website by early fall 2020.

DC PCSB takes student health and safety seriously. I hope this letter addresses your questions about our role in the oversight of public charter schools related to student safety and well-being.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Cruz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rick Cruz
Chair
DC Public Charter School Board